



SOURCE SHEET

EXPERIENCES AND REALITIES OF GETTING CAUGHT IN THE SYSTEM

Locked Up for Skipping School: Christel's Story, FRONTLINE: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3bKZRbmJvO8>

FRONTLINE PBS, Published on June 8, 2015

Video Description:

There are 2.3 million people locked up in the United States, around half for non-violent crimes. This is Christel's story. She says she's locked up for skipping school.

Guiding Questions:

- What reactions did you have while watching and listening to Christel's story?
- What surprised you? What didn't surprise you?
- What are your reflections on the following quote?

"The data plays out really clearly - that once a child is involved with us formally, it increases the likelihood that they continue to be involved with us or move to the adult system. When you hear those doors lock behind you and somebody has to start calling for keys and numbers every time you move and somebody's watching you 24 hours a day, how do you help but internalize that? Especially as a child, how do you help but internalize that this must be my natural habitat?"

-Commissioner Hassan Davis, Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice, 2012-14.

Select poems written by students

From: [Spotlight: Alternative Schools, By Carla Amurao, Tavis Smiley Reports, PBS, March 2013.](#)

The following are works of poetry from students who have attended Spokane's SAC School and Los Angeles County's Challenger Memorial Youth Center who were "given the chance to shed light on the realities of their lives and experiences."

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There Is No Stopping It¹

by Mandii

There is no stopping it.
The bullet rips through the hot summer haze
missing trees and dodging unexpected birds
coming to the body fate has chosen.
Finally, like a blast of fire blasting towards him,
it hits like thunder hitting a wall.
He stops.
He stares at me.
His hand reaches for me but falls as I take a step back.
But he grabs me tightly, and I feel his hands move down as
he falls to his knees.
Although my heart was racing so fast before, it comes to a
halt in my chest.
I see the brother I once knew as my hero, my Bubba, lying
still on the ground covered in blood.
But just as the tears began to fall I realize...
There is no stopping it.
The bullet has chosen the body of my big brother.
Yet again, it is another innocent body.
As I'm walking onto the plane, to a new life, I stop and look
at the one I'm leaving behind, and I
knew that there was nothing left for me but reminders of
the nightmare that will never go away.
But then again, everyday I still wonder what would have
happened if that bullet chose me.
There is no stopping it.

Halloween

by Anonymous

Strolling down the dark, ominous street, sounds of children yelling and laughing is all I hear. All I see are big blowing up ghosts hanging in trees, cottony spider webs covering the buses, nearly rotted pumpkins sitting on porches, and bratty little kids running house-to-house. I think to myself, "Damn. I always get excited for Halloween, but it's never as fun as it was when I was younger. I just don't have the imagination or the creativity..."

I have a sort of envy, watching these kids run around and laugh, and just enjoy their night worrying about who gets the most candy or the best candy. And then there's me and my dumbass. The only thing I'm worrying about is getting drunk or high, like I'm obligated or something. But the whole time

¹ The two writing pieces, "There Is No Stopping It" and "Halloween" were published in *InRoads* Issue 15 (2012), an open forum for the creative endeavors of participants in Writers in the Community.

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I'm reminiscing on my childhood, when I enjoyed the candy and didn't worry about anything else. I used to be afraid of ghosts, and witches, and stuff like that. But now, I'm scared of getting hurt and worrying my parents while I'm doing idiotic stuff when I'm in that state of mind. But even worse, I'm slowly becoming addicted to the party life. This is the scariest Halloween ever.

There ain't no wrong or no right for no reason
This man said he was crazy, living an illusion
He wasn't like others
He had no respect
Out on the streets
treated like a reject
As he got older
he always lost a friend
Like the peddles on a rose
always fall again
He always trusted his friends
but never trusted himself
Staving his own back
thinking it was someone else
Always climbing the gate
to get to the other side
But what was over the gate
he didn't have in mind
Looking for his needs
to have in possession
Always wanting more
led him towards the wrong direction
Living life he new he had to let go of the rage
But to him he was already locked up in a cage
See, I'm in the end of the story
You're on the first page
It's just like a game
Dying on the first stage.

- In Camp Munz (2009)
- Christopher
14 Years Old

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Have you ever had somebody judge who you are
Have you ever let those feelings just rip you apart
Have you ever had some one paint your picture
And you just thought that it didn't fit ya
In the end of who you are is like the tip of
a candle.

The fires burning and its hard to handle.

Its about to blow off

Your body is trapped inside

Your left in the darkness

Theres no more light.

And sometimes you just dont like yourself

Wishing you could be somebody else

Your just letting people make who you are

Your just going to be another brick on the wall

I might be on that wall, and I may be stuck

But Im going to be the strong one that holds it up

I made my choices

Did what I did

Now these pictures

Remain in my head

- During Probation (2009-2010)
- Christopher
- 15 years old

Guiding Questions:

- What reactions did you have while reading these poems?
- Which poem struck you or resonated the most with you? Why?
- What does this poetry convey that statistics and data might not?

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